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Total children in county under age 6: 19,086

Children under age 6 living in poverty: 7.4%

Lexington County Highlights

- 270 families with 362 children received in-home parenting services.
- "The new standards are better for our families & programs." Parent Centers.
- "Our childcare center could never have made the the improvements in teacher education without First Steps intervention." (COE)

Lexington County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2008 Annual Report*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Collaboration, partnership and community effort are the foundational characteristics of Lexington County First Steps. Our county continues as a testimony to the efforts of the Lexington County community reflecting the collective wisdom of its many willing partners. Parenting Services is the largest single program serving 270 families with 362 children in five independent school districts. Each Parent Center is unique to its community, but cooperating through sharing of common vision and purpose. *From Day One to Grade One*, the new mom's hospital bags delivered to Lexington Medical Center, (3,000 births in FY08) defines collaboration to its fullest extent with 100% of materials and labor donated by multiple partnering agencies. Childcare Quality Enhancement and two newly awarded Centers of Excellence grants have greatly increased LCFS's presence in childcare provider services. In addition, monthly training workshops (\$5.00 per person) are offered for providers, averaging 50 or more participants per session. The LCFS Annual Early Care and Education Conference, the largest First Steps county partnership conference in SC, had 800+ participants in 2008 and was again hosted at Batesburg-Leesville High School. The entire school campus and Fine Arts Center were utilized, offering 6 hours of continuing education, vendor exhibits and lunch for a modest \$40 registration fee. Monthly workshops as well as the annual conference are self sustaining financially. Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK) served 70 children with all school districts participating in funding the kindergarten transition program. Two districts each fully fund an additional 10 students. New standards of accountability with measurable results are absolutely necessary across all programs. Consequently, data management has become a major focus. Accountability standards for 2008 have challenged programs' routines and given insight for justification of services, often in areas very difficult to quantify. Lexington County First Steps is committed to meeting these requirements and challenges and has made necessary modifications to accommodate these standards.

James H. Riddle, Jr.
Executive Director
Lexington County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Parents As Teachers

Program description: The national program, Parents As Teachers, an in-home visitation program, is the model used in each of Lexington County's five school districts and has been our model since the inception of First Steps in Lexington County (2001). Before this date, there were parenting services using PAT in some of the five school districts, and in 2001, services were added to all districts and expanded in those already existing. Originally, a single visit was made monthly with a few exceptions where the assessment indicated additional visits. Now all families receive two monthly visits with intensity being the focus for fewer families.

Program results:

- 270 families with 362 children served

Average months enrolled	7.36
Total visits	2,297
Average visits per family per month	1.16

Note: Standard is 2.0 with minimum of 1.5. Lexington County did not meet this requirement in 2008. All Parent Centers have increased visits per month to 2.0. All families receive two monthly visits with intensity being the focus for fewer families.
- New assessment tools, Key to Interactive Parenting Scale (KIPS) and Adult Child Interactive Reading Inventory (ACIRI) were first used in 2008. Utilization of these tools has been challenging and required training and understanding. These instruments are now used appropriately in all Parent Centers. Video taping of the parent and child in the home (required by KIPS) has proven to be advantageous in the assessment process

Note: Standard for use of KIPS is 75%. In 2008, Lexington County had fewer than 75% of families receiving a pre assessment with KIPS. All Parent Centers are now utilizing this instrument appropriately with documented monthly monitoring..

Below is an explanation of these assessment tools.

The KIPS is an evaluation of parenting behaviors related to interactions between parents and children. It involves an observation of a parent playing with his or her child for 20 minutes to examine 12 different behaviors. The KIPS is used to evaluate parents of children ages 2 months old up to 5 years of age. KIPS is an evaluation based on a 5-point scoring scale.

The ACIRI is an interactive reading inventory for parents and children ages 2.5 years old to 5 years old. The ACIRI is a literacy-specific evaluation based on the observation of a

parent and child reading together and is scored on a 3-point scale. It evaluates the interactions between parents and children relating to literacy acquisition.

- Improvements, as measured by ACIRI, have been reflected in evaluating matched differences. (Matched difference is defined as clients who receive both a pre and post assessment. The pre assessment establishes a baseline with the post assessment determining a gain or loss resulting in a percent of change).

Adult

Average pre	1.46
Average post	1.66
Matched difference	.20
Percent change	12.20%

Child

Average pre	1.49
Average post	1.67
Matched difference	.18
Percent change	12.08%

From Day One to Grade One (New Mom's Hospital Bag)

Program description:

From Day One to Grade One (a hospital bag program for new mothers) is a continuing strategy from the inception of First Steps in Lexington County, originally a partnership between Success By Six and Lexington School District One. Each bag contains appropriate information and materials from multiple sources, including a board book from the Lexington County Library System, and is distributed by the hospital at discharge to all new mothers delivering a baby at Lexington Medical Center. The program's purpose is to recruit participants into Parent As Teachers in each of the county's five school districts

Program results:

- There were 2,137 bags distributed at discharge to new mothers at Lexington Medical Center. The bags are given to every woman delivering a baby (not to first time mothers only) regardless of county of residence. A board book is included in every bag along with available age-appropriate services.
- 156 referrals, defined as "interest return-cards", were forwarded to the appropriate Parent Center in the county after being added to the new moms LCFS database. The return-cards for new mothers from outside Lexington County were sent to that county's First Steps office.

QUALITY CHILD CARE

Childcare Quality Enhancement

Program description: Three childcare centers received grants for quality improvement; namely Little Panther in Pelion, Happy Camper in Gilbert, and Smart Kids in Irmo. Additionally, Brookland Academy in West Columbia and Lake Murray Montessori in Lexington received grants for pursuing NAEYC and Midlands Elite Gymnastics Academy (MEGA) received a grant to maintain NAEYC standards.

(Note: NAEYC = National Association for the Education of Young Children, and is the accepted national accreditation for childcare centers)

Program results:

- Quality enhancement grants were offered to 6 childcare providers, serving 351 children
- Total technical assistance visits were 201 with an average of 3.41 visits per month.
- Total hours of technical assistance were 383.25 averaging 114.4 minutes per visit
- Director's forums were offered to center directors.
- Pre and post Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales (ECERS) and Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scales (ITERS) reflected significant improvements in centers. Improvements varied among centers; however, every Center showed gains.

ECERS Results

Pre assessment: 4.52

Post assessment: 5.44

Matched Difference (gain): .92

Percentage gain: 20.35%

There is a wide range of post assessment scores, 3.91 to 6.86; however, the overall percentage gain of 20.35% is tremendous.

ITERS Results

Pre assessment: 3.65

Post assessment: 3.94

Matched Difference (gain): .26

Percentage gain: 7.1%

The overall percentage gain for ITERS is also impressive.

- The Resource Center served 14 childcare centers serving 943 children to include all types of providers; namely licensed centers, faith based programs and in-home providers.
- The monthly newsletter, *Growing Together*, was sent to 330 childcare providers and individuals, including some out of county providers.

Centers of Excellence

Program description: A Centers of Excellence award of \$400,000 was made to Lexington County First Steps for School District Four, specifically as a plaintiff district in the recent education equity funding law suit. The life of the grant is two years for two childcare centers, Emmanuel Wee Care in Swansea and Gaston Preschool in Gaston. The program of services was begun late in fiscal 2008 with only a few months of data collection.

Below is an explanation of the intent of the grant and requirements of the selection of children served with need-based scholarships.

Research suggests that long-term school readiness benefits can be derived by exposing low-income children to high quality, center-based early childhood interventions. The First Steps Centers of Excellence model is intended to assist high-risk and/or low-income families in accessing high quality, research-based interventions that might otherwise be unavailable to them. This is accomplished through both targeted recruitment of high-risk families and the provision of need-based scholarships (to the COE project site). Highest preference is given to children whose family income levels fall at or below the federal poverty definition, those in foster care, and those exhibiting special needs such as behavioral/developmental concerns. Need-based childcare scholarships were established for participating children with *all families* contributing \$5.00 per week toward overall costs.

- Emmanuel Wee Care and Gaston Preschool serve 78 children.
- These Centers have 12 staff members.
- All teachers have completed at least one credit bearing course in early childhood education during the year
- 19 children received scholarships
- First year (full year) technical assistance visits: 108
- Duration of each visit: 128 minutes
- Health screenings: 72
- Dental screenings: 64
- Average monthly PAT home visits: 2 (parenting services meet the same criteria as the clients in the five school district Parent Centers)

CHILDCARE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Program description: Monthly training was offered to childcare providers and their staff with course offerings in child growth & development, curriculum and other needed topics. Topics were determined by course evaluation forms as well as Lexington County First Steps' annual Needs and Resource Assessment survey. An annual Early Care and Education conference was continued in 2008, co-sponsored by First Steps of Lexington and Saluda Counties and the Midlands Association for the Education of Young Children (MAEYC). Invitations were sent to other county childcare providers and early childhood educators. This conference has grown to 800 persons (participants, instructors and volunteers). Monthly trainings and the annual conference are self sustaining financially.

- Monthly trainings are offered during the school year. Attendance averages 50+ paid participants at a charge of \$5.00.

- The Early Care and Education Conference was attended by 800+ persons with participants paying \$40 for 6 continuing education hours to include lunch. The annual conference is the largest First Steps conference in South Carolina. FY 2008 was the sixth annual conference and the fifth year it was hosted on the campus of Batesburg-Leesville High School.
- The Fun Fair had over 1,000 people, both children and adults. This annual event was moved from the Lexington County Public Library in Lexington to the Arena in South Congaree to accommodate the increasing attendance and to provide shelter in the event of rain.

SCHOOL TRANSITION

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program description: Certified Kindergarten teachers make 8 home visits over a four week to eight week period with families/children during the summer prior to the student beginning Kindergarten. Participants are identified by the five school districts in Lexington County. Students are screened for participation, and parent participation is required. During the home visits, children and families are introduced to actual materials used in Kindergarten classrooms, and are given a Kindergarten Transition Toolkit to keep. The toolkit includes books, puzzles, clay, blocks, floor mats, etc. The final visit is a “field trip” to the school where the child will attend class in the fall. Change in student and parent interaction is measured before and after participation. Lexington County First Steps will build ongoing relationships with Countdown teachers, children, schools, and families in order to measure longer-term impact of student success and parent involvement.

Program results:

- 68 children were served out of 70 that were initially identified: Lexington Districts One, Two and Three served 10 students each and Districts Four and Five each served 20 students.
 - 88% completed the minimum visits of 7
- Improvement percentage gains between before and after surveys
- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Reading to/listening to child read from a book | 15% |
| • Talked about letters, words or numbers | 13% |
| • Drew, painted or did other arts and crafts | 19% |
| • Kept a regular morning or bedtime schedule | 12% |
| • Visited a library with the child | 15% |

“Before Surveys” were conducted at the first visit of the program.

“After Surveys” were conducted at the end of the program.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$ 708,209
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 46,059
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$ 1
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$ 413
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$ 153,321
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$ 0
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 0
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 72,147
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$ 4,122
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$ 485,174
TOTAL: \$1,469,446	

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
2011 Parents As Teachers	\$ 994,621
2013 From Day One to Grade One (<i>New Mom's Bags</i>)	\$ 11,063
4062 Countdown to Kindergarten	\$ 20,531
6012 Childcare Quality Enhancement	\$ 162,727
6052 Childcare Training & Prof Development	\$ 79,204
7032 Scholarship Initiatives	\$ 41,838
9012 Public Health-Based Services	\$ 1,573
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 82,186
Administrative Functions	\$ 75,703
TOTAL: \$1,469,446	

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Conference Exhibitor Fee	\$ 150
Greenville Technical College	\$ 100

Resource Center Membership Fees	\$ 160
St. Andrews Women Club	\$ 3,000
Workshop Fees and Conference Fees	\$ 31,290
Total	\$ 34,700

Local Match Percentage for FY 2008: 73%

(15% is Legislative requirement)

The in-kind match from the five school districts alone is 59%.

Administrative Match for FY 2008: 5.2%

(≤ 8% is Legislative requirement)

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Category	Name
Pre-Kindergarten through Primary Educator	Judy Tinder
	Angela Willis
Family Education, Training & Support Services	Gigi Towers
	Vacant
Childcare/Early Childhood Dev./Ed. Provider	Rhonda Wiley
	Cathy Walker
Health Care Provider	Vacant
	Cindy Sweigart
Transportation Provider	Vacant
	Vacant
Non-Profit Organization/Services to Fam.&Child.	Dianne Hinson
	Lydia Freeman
Faith Community	Jennifer McConnell
	David Torrey
Business Community	Penny Danielson
	Vacant
Parent of Child Served in First Steps	Vacant
	Linda Tabor
	Vacant
Early Childhood Education	Crystal Campbell
	Michelle Perry
	Herman Knopf, Ph.D.
	Clare Hodge, Ph.D.
Department of Social Services	Vacant
Department of Health & Environmental Control	Roy Tucker
Head Start	Vacant
Library	Ellen Stringer
School District One	Heath Branham
School District Two	Gina Henderson
School District Three	Tom Sparks
School District Four	Sylvia Lucas
School District Five	Mary Kennerly, Ph.D.
Legislative Delegation Appointee	Ada Jane Setzler
Legislative Delegation Appointee	Debbie Shealy
Legislative Delegation Appointee	Tara Grigsby
Legislative Delegation Appointee	Michael Sponhour

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY08, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.

Success Stories

Morgan started with the Pelion Parenting Center when she was about 16 months old, attending weekly playgroups and special events. While she had no developmental delays or issues of concern, she is from a very rural area with little in the way of resources and socialization. Being a first-time mom and dad, there were many developmental discussions and much time spent together in parenting sessions. This family is such an inspiration to our other families, as mom and dad both would follow the advice given and extend on program activities which help provide a good, solid foundation for school success. Morgan just started 5 year old kindergarten this year, and is quite the academic and social success! I am so proud of this family and the dedication in seeing the value of our program. She and her family attended almost every possible event, studied carefully the parenting and developmental information and appreciated the efforts of the parenting center. Morgan is a prime example of success, not only in school, but in her community, as well. She is quite the social butterfly when she is out and about in town, continuing to utilize the public library, and all other events in the area. Her mother and father are volunteers in many areas, and have helped our center in many ways even since Morgan has gone to the “big school.” She would have done well on her own with the help of the wonderful parenting foundation she received, however, she will excel far beyond any expectations because of her home-school-community relationship built through the services of the Pelion Parenting Center and First Steps.

May 13, 2008

The Star Program
Granby Education Center
Cayce, SC 29033

Dear Star Program,

I would like to say I have truly enjoyed the Star Program, it has been a great resource for my family and I. I would also, like to commend all of the Parent Educators, that I have worked with during the time I have been enrolled. I saw a pamphlet about the program when we had visited a Children's event of some sort. I was a little afraid to join a program like this, because I felt uncomfortable about someone coming into my home. Little did I know, this would be a great experience for my family.

My son was three years old, when he joined. He really seemed to enjoy the class time a lot. He is now 11 years old. Denise Whitesell, his Parent Educator, really made us feel comfortable. It wasn't like she was coming to my home to look for things I done wrong or see my home as unfit. She made me very comfortable, and ensured me, she was there to HELP with me with my growing son. Since, I was a new mother, I had a lot to learn.

My daughter, born in 2003, is now four, she has been in the program, since she was a year old. She has learned so many things. Her Parent Educator, Sherri Stewart, is

wonderful. My family and I are so comfortable around her. She also, encourages me to not give up. I know she is there to help me. Sheri, also ask about my son, although she doesn't have to do that, since he is no longer enrolled. I can even ask Sheri, the "hard" questions, I'm not sure if I should, or if I feel bad about the way I disciplined my child. I don't feel intimidated, or afraid about her making me feel as if I done something "wrong".

I think it is so amazing to see, the difference in the two children. My son struggles so hard in school. My daughter just seems to pick up on things so much quicker. I truly believe it is because of the Star Program. I just didn't realize that such things, as working with my son in kitchen or letting him use scissors at a early age, would make such a difference. I didn't know, this helps with math and problem solving skills. I done these things with my daughter and not him. He started later in life in the Program and she started earlier.

That is why, I strongly believe this Program, should be a requirement for new mothers, especially, young, new mothers. I have introduced, some of my friends to the program, but they feel intimidated about someone coming to their home also. I assure them, they will be very Thankful, if they join. It is just not that kind of Program, it is for the Parent and Educator to work together.

So with that being said, I strongly encourage the Program, to continue to distribute information through the hospital about the "Star Program". I think the World will be a better place, if we all work together. The Children are our Future.

Thank You All for you Support,

ReGina Buff

May 27, 2008

I would like to say a few words about what a great program the S.T.A.R. program is. It is because of this program that my 7 year old daughter thrives at school. Our family has built a wonderful friendship with fellow moms, parent educators and the staff over the last 7 years. The S.T.A.R. program has allowed me to see my children's strengths and weaknesses and built confidence in both of us. We always feel, as parents, we are doing a good job but it is not until someone opens our eyes, that we realize that our children are capable of much more. I love that this program provides opportunities for me to see that they can be challenged more. There have been times with both, my 4 and 7 year old, that I didn't think they were ready for certain things, (cutting with scissors, playing games, etc.) and I was thrilled to be shown that they were. I found that I was not challenging them enough. Our parent educator, Linda Davis, and the ST.A.R. staff showed me that my children were ready, and in many cases excelled because of their encouragement. We love all aspects of this program from the monthly visits, the playgroup and the one on one time with the parents. I have enjoyed watching my children learn and learn how to

behave in a classroom setting. Sheri Stewart and Linda Davis have been excellent first teachers for our little ones. I was even able to learn a little Spanish during class time. Gina Henderson brought encouragement and focus on parenting during her “Chat time” sessions with parents. I always look forward to the end of the year, when we do the Denver test. I learn so much about how my children have grown. It is such an ego boost for both my self and my child. I can not say enough about how wonderful this program is and what it has meant to our family!

2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lexington County

Total Children Under Six: 19,086

CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

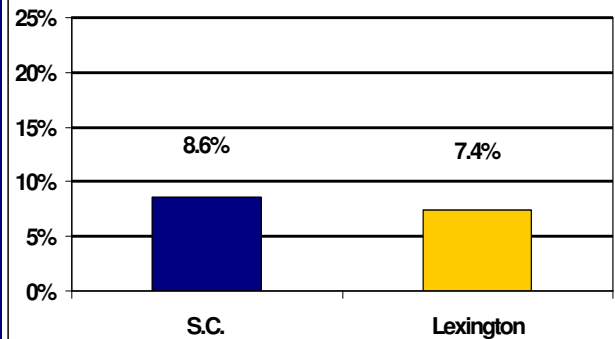
Lexington County (2007): 7.4%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 14 Lexington County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the "below basic" level (PACT) by third grade.

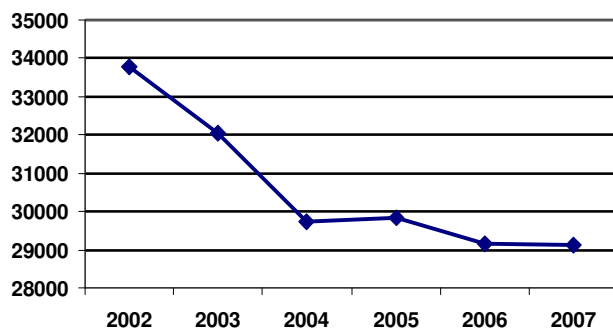
Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.

1,417 of Lexington County's 19,086 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.

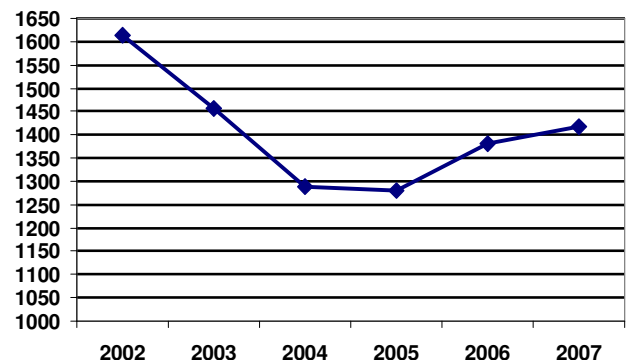
Children Under Age 6 Receiving TANF Benefits
(August 2007)



South Carolina Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



Lexington County Children Under Age 6
Receiving TANF Benefits
2002-2007



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lexington County

Total Children Under Six: 19,086

CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

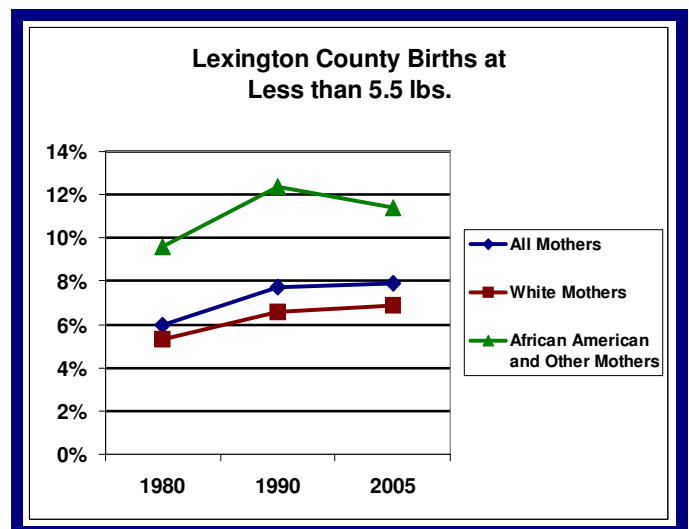
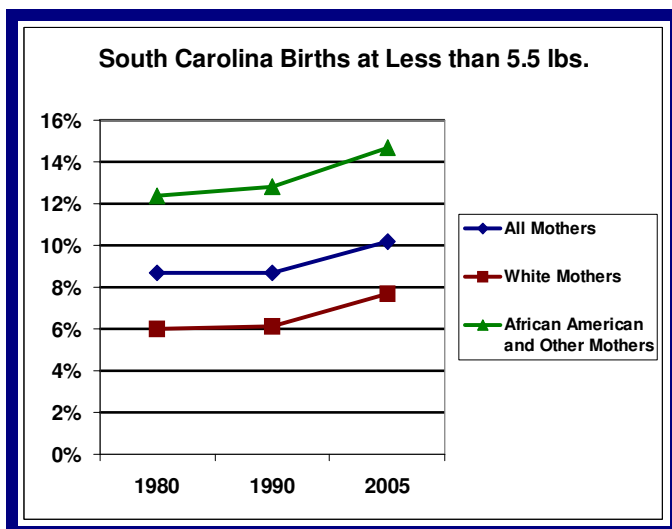
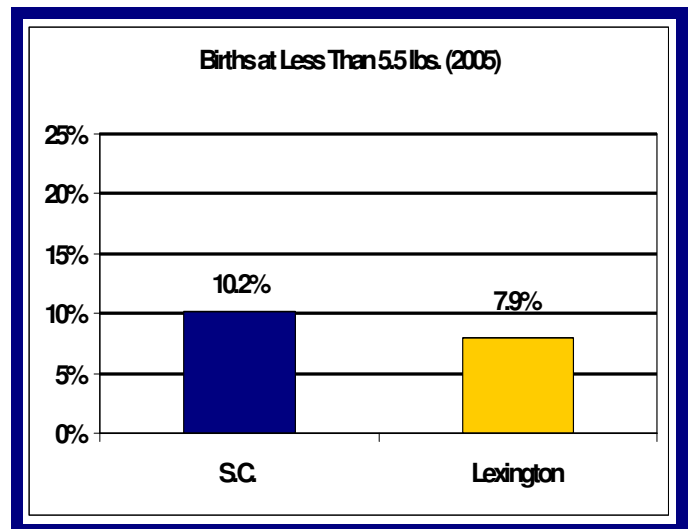
Lexington County (2005): 7.9%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 12 Lexington County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.

Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.

250 of the 3,170 children born in Lexington County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lexington County

Total Children Under Six: 19,086

BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

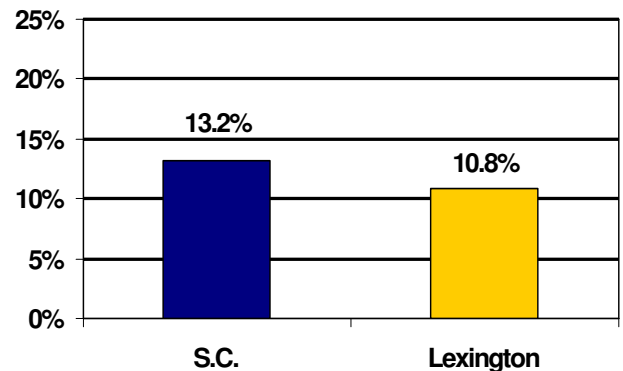
Lexington County (2005): 10.8%

Fast Fact: 1 in 10 Lexington County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

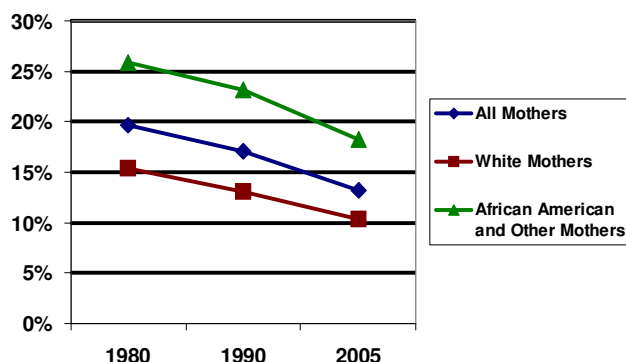
Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.

341 of the 3,170 children born in Lexington County during 2005 had teenage mothers.

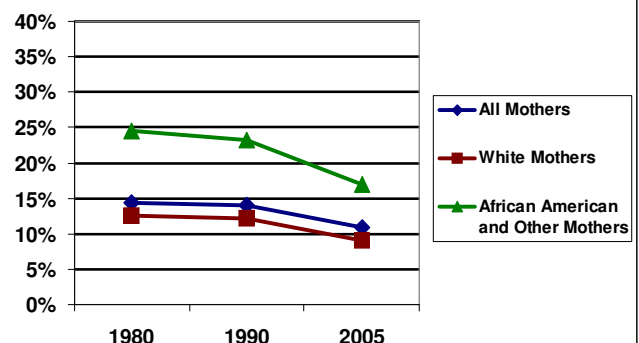
Births to Teenage Mothers (2005)



South Carolina Births to Teenage Mothers



Lexington County Births to Teenage Mothers



2008 School Readiness Risk Profile

Lexington County

Total Children Under Six: 19,086

BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

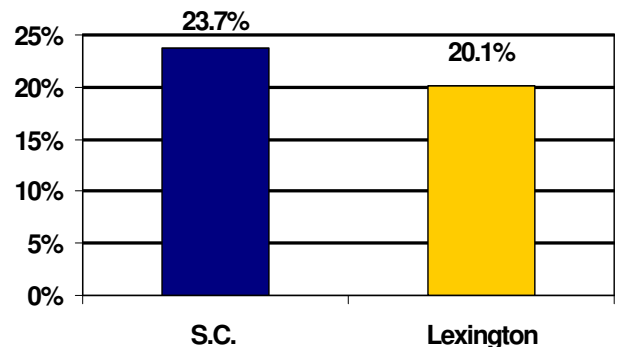
Lexington County (2005): 20.1%

Fast Fact: 1 in 5 children in Lexington County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

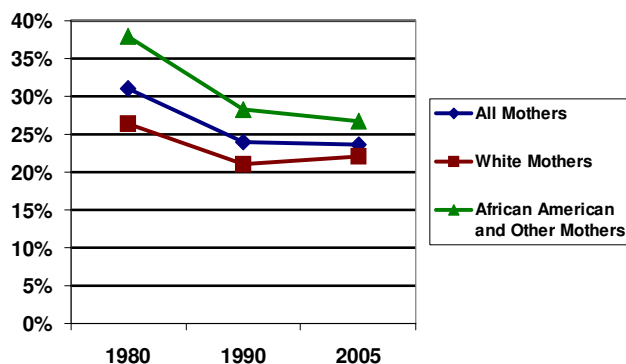
Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.

636 of the 3,170 children born in Lexington County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.

Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma (2005)



SC Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma



Lexington County Births to Mothers with Less than a High School Diploma

